



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

**Date:** 2/6/2004

**GAIN Report Number:** E24024

## European Union

## Organic Products

## European Hearing on Organic Food and Farming 2004

**Approved by:**

Christine Strossman

U.S. Mission to the European Union, Brussels

**Prepared by:**

Hilde Brans

---

**Report Highlights:**

The EU is in the process of preparing an Organic Action Plan. This Plan will form the basis for the development of new EU legislative initiatives covering all aspects of organic food and farming. On January 22, 2004, the European Commission held a public hearing which involved Ministers from member states and the acceding countries, organic farm organizations, consumer experts and other stakeholders. Based on the discussions at the hearing, the Commission will draft an Action Plan by April 4, 2004.

---

Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Brussels USEU [BE2]  
[E2]

## European Hearing on Organic Food and Farming – Towards an EU Organic Action Plan

### Action Plan

The European Commission is in the process of preparing an EU Organic Action Plan. This Plan will form the basis for the development of new EU legislative initiatives covering all aspects of organic food and farming. On January 22, 2004, the European Commission held a "European Hearing on Organic Food and Farming – Towards a European Action Plan". The hearing involved Agricultural Ministers from Member States, acceding countries and candidate countries, national organic farming organizations, researchers, consumer experts and other stakeholders. Based on the discussions at the public hearing, the Commission will draft an Action Plan in the form of a Communication to the European Council and Parliament. The Commission is expected to present the final Action Plan by April 4, 2004.

The Action Plan will address issues such as:

- the balanced growth of supply and demand,
- the needs of organic food processing companies and the adequacy of distribution networks and marketing strategies,
- the role of the supermarkets,
- the implementation of the 2003 CAP reform which could provide a framework for the future development of organic farming in the EU,
- support for organic farmers through rural development measures,
- improving inspection systems,
- the harmonization of national standards and certification,
- the use of the EU organic logo alongside other private logos or labels,
- co-existence of organic farming with conventional methods,
- co-existence of organic farming with genetically modified agriculture.

### Conference Program

Speakers at the conference covered the whole range of interests that impact on the organic sector and influence its development. The program consisted of three sessions:

- session 1 "The place of organic farming in European Agriculture" included presentations on "What do consumers expect from organic farming?", "What do organic farmers expect from policy makers?", "From farm supply to consumer packages, challenges for the processing industry", "How can we optimize the market?"
- session 2 "The place of organic farming in the wider European society" included presentations on "Are the organic consumer labels conveying the right message?", "Marketing and distribution concepts - the view of the supermarket", "Can the organic standards continue to meet societal demands?", "Co-existence with GMOs and organic seed production"
- session 3 "Concluding session".

All the speakers' presentations can be downloaded from DG Agriculture's website at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/events/organic/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/events/organic/index_en.htm).

### Background

The concept on an EU Action Plan for organic food and farming originated at a conference organized by the Danish Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries in May 2001. The issue

was brought up by the Swedish Presidency and the Agriculture Council invited the Commission in June 2001 to study the possibility of developing a European Organic Action Plan. In February 2003, the Commission organized an on-line consultation: a working document and a questionnaire with 12 key points were published on DG Agriculture's website and the public was invited to react to this questions and give additional comments. In December 2003, the Agriculture Council discussed the progress of the Action Plan and provided input into the Commission's strategy for an Action Plan in the form of Council conclusions.

**Visit our website:** our website [www.useu.be/agri/usda.html](http://www.useu.be/agri/usda.html) provides a broad range of useful information on EU import rules and food laws and allows easy access to USEU reports, trade information and other practical information. More information on the organic sector can be found at [www.useu.be/agri/organic.html](http://www.useu.be/agri/organic.html).

E-mail: AgUSEUBrussels@usda.gov

**Related reports from USEU Brussels:**

Report Number	Title	Date Released
E23020	EU Action Plan for Organic Farming	2/11/2003
E23174	EU Action Plan for Organic Farming – Online Consultation Results	9/15/2003
E23248	Council Conclusions on the EU Organic Action Plan	12/18/2003
These reports can be accessed through our website <a href="http://www.useu.be/agri/organic.html">www.useu.be/agri/organic.html</a> or through the FAS website <a href="http://www.fas.usda.gov/scriptsw/attacherep/default.asp">http://www.fas.usda.gov/scriptsw/attacherep/default.asp</a> .		